

2012 master degree project

Title

# BOAFLOWERPOWER :The comfort zone

HDK, MASTER OF FINE ARTS, textile art

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## **0. Introduction**

BOAFLOWERPOWER is a theme of the artworks I produce.

I grew up seeing my mother doing flower arrangement. I also grew up in the big city, feeling jostled by people. As I made relationships with people in the city, I could sense many similarities between the people and flowers in the flower market. The people, like the flowers in the buckets at the flower market, were being placed together but they were still their own individual unit. City life in this contemporary society makes people interact indirectly, pushing them into more solitude even though they may dislike the feeling of loneliness.

When I make art, I think about me in this world:

why do I want to do art? what kind of art do I want to do? what can I do with my art in this world?

Since I was interested in flowers, I was familiar with the Flowerpower movement. Commonly, the Flowerpower movement is associated with hippie culture in the 60s. Though it was a response against the war in Vietnam, what fascinated me most about the Flowerpower movement for the peaceful world, were the people protesting in a very passive way, becoming like a cult wearing flowers and clothes embroidered with flowers. The flower was a metaphorical substitute for guns.

This way of protesting something, with an idealistic attitude and thought, inspires me to relate to it through art. So, I redefined the idea of 'Flowerpower' in terms of current society. The metaphorical background is similar- flowers mean human beings in this world- they are soldiers in this modern battlefield. BOAFLOWERPOWER is a response against the tiny wars in daily life. BOAFLOWERPOWER fights against the frustrations, discouragements and many emotions that are unhealthy to grow in humanity's flowerlike soul. It makes us think about fun and pleasant things, helping to find out new positive possibilities in daily life. Even though these pleasantries and possibilities may be small, BOAFLOWERPOWER will magnify them.

## 1. Comfort Zone

- the space I used to peek and seek or, weep and heal.

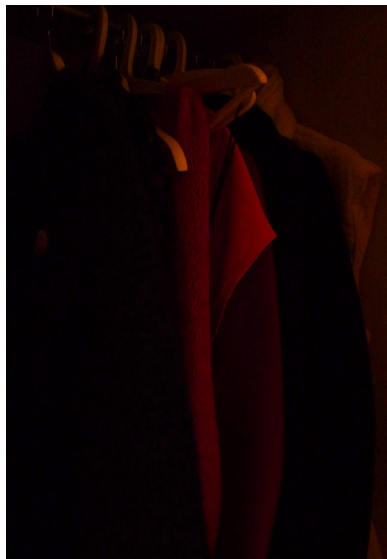
I believe that people have a longing for a 'comfort zone', a drop-in space where one may have distance from others, from things, a space to look into oneself and think about things from a different point of view.

When I was a little girl, I used to get in to a hanger rack for clothes. The hanger rack was in between the wall and my bed. I would go under the hanger rack, dwell in between the clothes, and spend some time. At first, maybe I would go into this space because I wondered whether I could fit in, and also to play peek-a-boo with my brother. Afterwards, I would go into that space more in order to hide myself, listen to others secretly, or become like a strange creature that hides itself from others hoping not to be found or not to be found. I would stare at the dimming light that came from the outside to the inside. Sometimes there was a total darkness, a silence that a small room could have. I could have had another space to hide myself in, such as a closet, but I was fond of this space because that it was not totally closed but still closed. I felt embraced by clothes being in the softness, they made me smell and touch and build relationship with them. While I was covered by certain warmth, I sometimes would go there to cry, to remember, to think, or to forget. I found personal healing power and amusement in the smallest space in the world I could be in.

Until I physically outgrew the space, it was my lair, my womb and my world.

Sitting in front of the warp, I get a feeling similar to the one I had in the comfort zone of my childhood. While I weave tapestry, though my work space is very much exposed, I feel like I am creating in a space similar to the one I had in the past. In this space, I use threads to fill up the empty to full, transparent parts to build a wall and give it the feeling of the warmth. If I was once squatting in a dark room, observing things outside from me, I am now moving my body intentionally, creating the room where I may find myself again crying, thinking, remembering and forgetting. My action is different from the past, having evolved from passive to active interaction, but I feel similar emotions. To me this is mine alone: My space, My work, My being. Only I could dwell here, this is a picture that only I could draw. Here, things have meaning only when they are connected with me.

This project started with an encounter of my life in childhood and my life now. I am still in search of a place to be alone, to enjoy the solitude yet I still want to be connected to the outside.



Hanger rack

sketches



## 2. Tapestry

The genre of Tapestry is mainly defined by a woven picture. I think of tapestries as very fine woven pictures, almost the same as paintings, very decorative. Like paintings tapestries are flat and have a perfect surface, finely woven with thin cotton, silk or wool threads.

Tapestry, for me, it is very special and precious field of art because of the material it uses and the time it takes. . Some people even say that weaving tapestry is as calming as meditation. I agree with this and I enjoy the calming effect, especially living in this hectic world.

With this tapestry, I wanted to include some aspects of traditional tapestry that must be on 'my tapestry' but I wanted to break some rules in order to experiment. So I could be in the context of tapestry but in a personal way, as many artists have done before me.



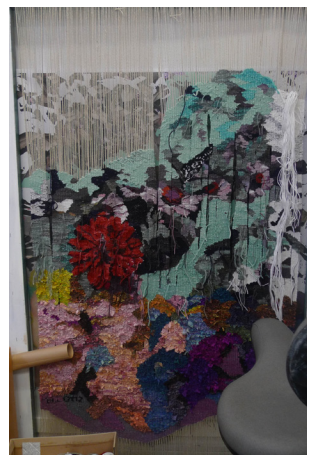
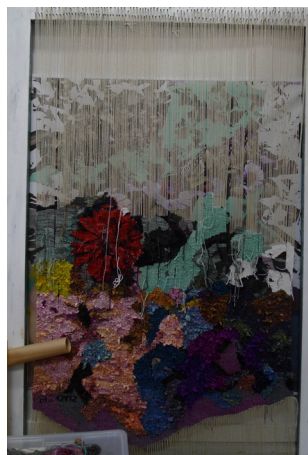
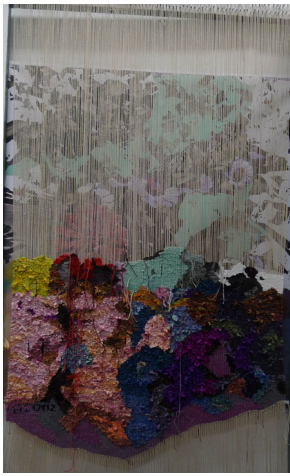
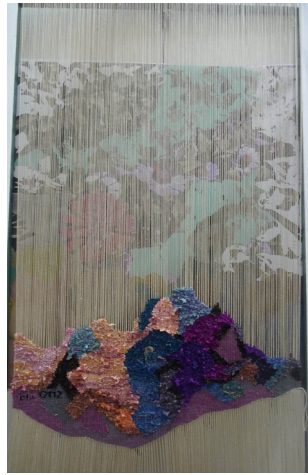
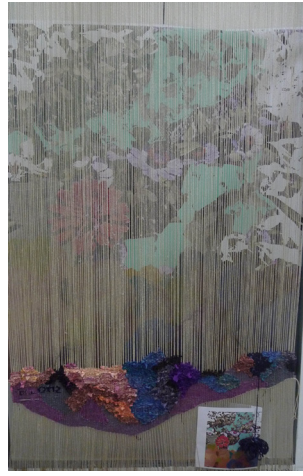
self portrait-crying 2009

### *Obey*

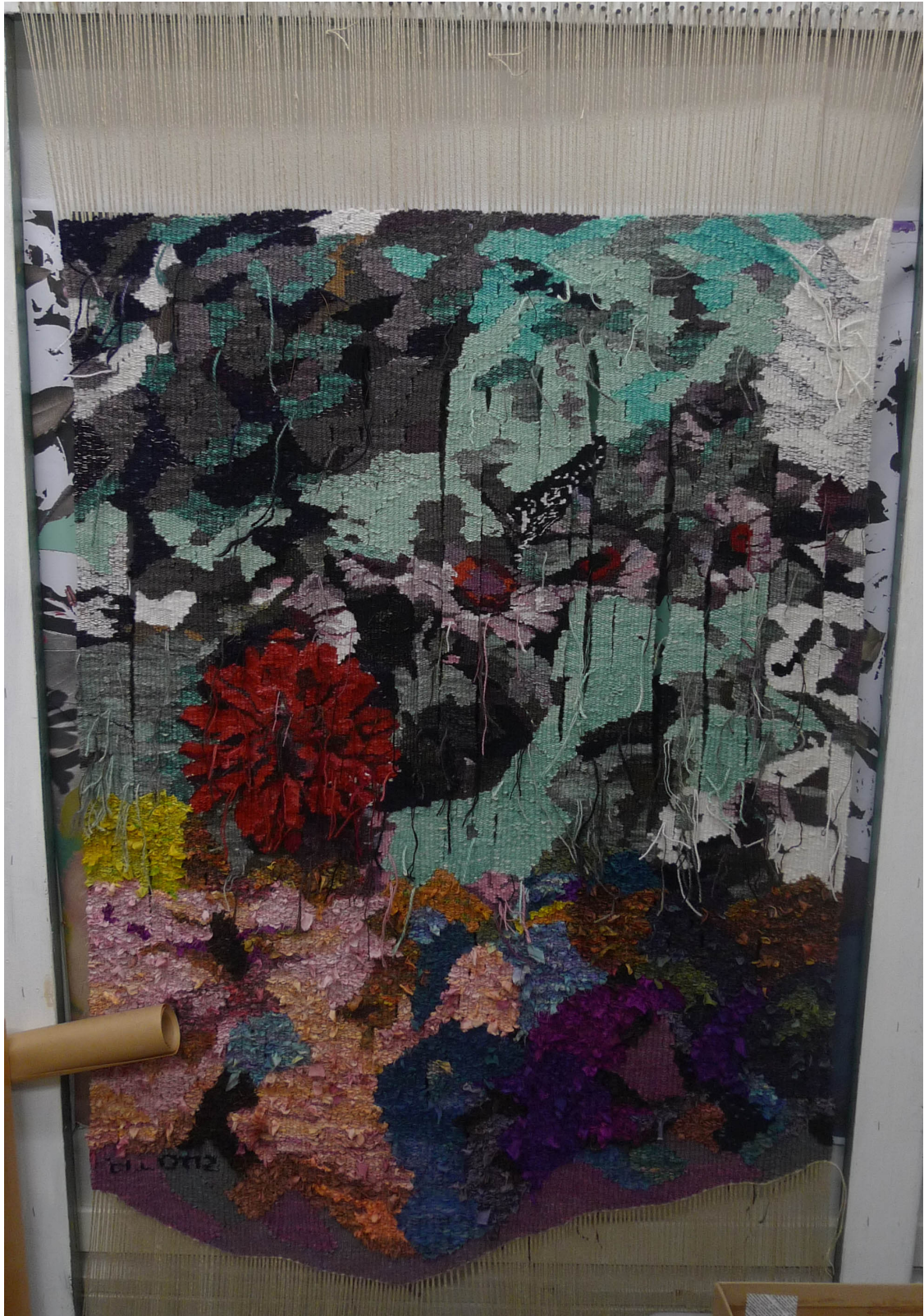
Participating in the traditional legacy is one of my attractions to tapestry. The long and calm process and the layering of threads reveal the time spent contemplating. The effort is obvious in the result, it is truly honest.

Firstly, I wanted to keep the variable colors in a figurative and decorative picture; to draw a dreamy world on the tapestry and express the feeling of fantasia- a most simple beauty that can only be understood at the first glance, like Verdure tapestries in the 16th century. 'Verdure tapestry' is also referred to as 'Garden tapestry', they contain plant motives and some landscapes. Secondly, I wanted to keep the traditional materials used in tapestry.

This will be detailed more in the 'material aspect'. But briefly I wanted to keep the natural materials like wool and silk in order to maintain the quality of the piece. Using the historical materials was one way for me to follow and participate in the traditional technique.







the front part.

## *Rebel*

Ways in which I broke away from tradition related to the surface of the tapestry.

I like to think of it as 'the breaking perfection of the surface'. I broke away from the traditional expression of surface in order to develop more in my language and give another role to the problematic element to be a very crucial character for this piece.

Firstly, I tried not to obsess about the flat and smooth surface, which is traditionally preserved in the style. Rather than obsess on that, I thought again of the picture being like oil paintings, similar with the flat space. However, some oil paintings have thick texture on the surface called 'Matiere'. I thought this texture tells more of the story, expression and impression. I experimented with this idea of putting texture in a textile way.

To do this, I put different bodied material having already some textures around the edge. The thicker material, silk ribbons which I cut and trimmed from flat fabric, I twisted and pulled to give a rough looking texture.

Secondly, I made a lot of slits. A slit is a hole that occurs when you weave tapestry, with some vertical shapes in clear lines, slits are created naturally. Slits are usually sewed after all the work is done, because if it is traditional way of weaving, slits can be a negative distraction to the finalized picture. To me for this project, I needed slits. And I decided to give slits the most important role in this project.





slits on the surface

### 3. Slit

I focused on the slit as a problematic element because I had discovered a possibility to experiment with slits in the last piece of tapestry I had worked on.

As usual, I finished working on weaving, in the session of finishing up the Tapestry. I went back to the wall of woven Tapestry and there were a lot of threads and holes on the backside. I became fascinated by the backside even though it looked messy, It reminded me of reality itself. It showed the time and material in an honest way. And the slits acted as a meeting point between the two different spaces.

I worked with this idea of slits as a meeting point as them being a vantage point from which one can see the perspective of two different sides.

I made a lot of slits intentionally. I made them in different sizes around the picture. This was to make them work as windows to the other side.

A bright space and a dark space.

A fairly textured front and a messy backstage.

#### 4. Material aspect

To weave a tapestry, firstly we think about picture then we think about yarn as a tool to draw the picture.

Though historically it is standard and favored for tapestries to be woven with very fine silk, wool and cotton yarns, I often felt hesitant when deciding to use these stereotypical materials.

*Destruction-Abakanowicz told me it is okay.*

When I saw the work of Madalena Abakanowicz, I was inspired to fight against submitting to the stereotype and certain restrictions of my tapestry training. Some of Abakanowicz's works are woven with thick, rough ropes to build huge sculptures. When I first saw pictures of her work, I could recognize her use of tapestry technique. But soon I found out that she was using the way of weaving as a tool for new expression of her sculpture. She didn't mean to weave tapestry.

*Tapestry design had no place in Abakanowicz's training as a fine artist. Enough of the original Bauhaus curriculum had survived in the training of Polish artist, however so that she knew the basics of producing weavings as a means to experiment with surface and texture.*



Photo Boa Jung .Magdalena Abakanowicz. *Brown coat* 1968, Sisal, 9 ft. 10 in. x 5 ft. 11 in. x 23 in. Courtesy of Henie- Onstad Artcenter, Hovikodden, Norway

However, I got courage to use different material but in the tapestry way. To weave oversized picture or some blurry pictures, it will be fine to use thicker material that has their body.

I dyed some fine silk fabrics several times, at least two or three times. When this process was complete, the fabrics which dyed already looked beautiful on their own merit. They were already substantial, a perfect artform. But I then sliced the fabrics into ribbons with widths varying from 1.5cm to 2.5cm. So to say, I cut the perfect surface into pieces of fabric and experienced the loss of perfection. Later on, these pieces gave me the feeling of raw material as if they were raw material from the beginning.

The destruction of the perfect object and the subsequent pursuit of a new perfection will be a key method in part of, or in the entirety of the project.

### *Perfection-Imperfection-Perfection*

After these processes, the work begins to speak what I want to express. Maybe I can even communicate through those processes themselves.

Often I take things in one way rather than thinking they may mean many things. It has become a restriction I have placed on myself. I often stick to one idea even though there may be many opportunities to experiment with something new.

As I mentioned before, when I saw the fabrics which had been dyed several times, I could not find a reason to destroy them. However, I felt that it was worth the risk to destroy them so that they may be transformed into a new and better image. The trial of overcoming the risk must be faced in order to taste the courage of having weathered through the destruction.

So I cut the flat fabric, weaved the slip of fabric and bodied warp into a textured surface. Occasionally, to do it effectively, I pulled out the slip a bit to show thickness, exposed their roughness as it was, or pulled out the endings to show irregular edges.

Seeing the process of this good original material being cut and woven into very different surfaced fabric invokes a question: "What is the difference in value between the original material and the transformed one?"



## Color

Paintings and tapestries have some common ground. Sometimes it is even difficult to classify whether a work is a painting or tapestry just by seeing pictures or at a glance.

Tapestry starts from the bottom up, layering threads, filling in the spaces. Painting starts from an empty flat canvas, layering pigments, adding more and more layers, before it is finished. For the matter of color, paintings have two different ways of dealing with color. Color is either mixed before it is put on the canvas or it is the result of several layers of paint.

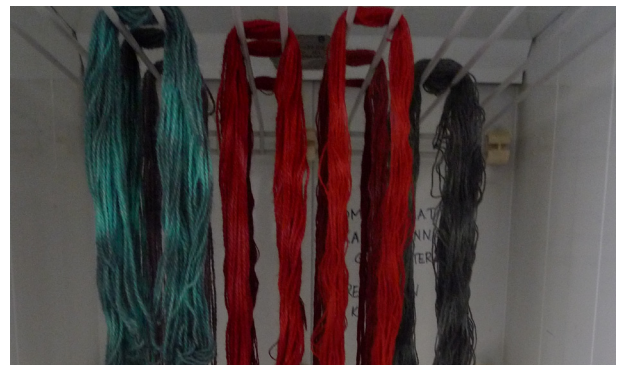
The first tapestry which I wove in Korea was made from thin wool threads from a market, they came in many different colors. We mixed the colors when we needed various hues and shades. The mixture of those thin threads sometimes contained different colors and sometimes were made from different shades. Piling up the mixture of threads results in a colored space. I was interested in the layering of colors in painting. I was hoping to chase the depth of color that this layering brings. So I tried to adopt this layering of colors into my tapestry. This time I tried to dye the threads as if I were painting them, several times to get a multiple mixture of colors and to get deeper sense of color.

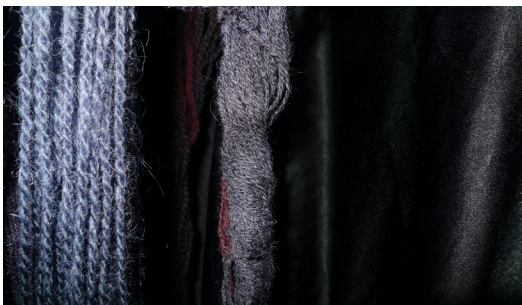
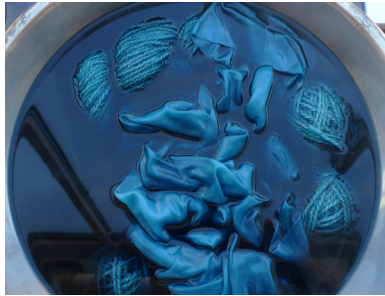
different colored material into a color





Gathering the different colors of threads, twisting to make marks and uneven effect





Coloring 2-3 times



## *Dyeing*

At first, I tried to make exact colors of each of the figures in my sketch. But, I realized that there were so many colors in the sketch and if I finished as I had planned, the picture would be look messy. Even if I had made all the colors, there would be some kind of color groups needed to bring together all of the figures into the picture.

At the beginning, pale base colors were applied on groups of threads. From each of the base groups, I took some threads for the second dyeing. After the second dyeing, a middle color was created. The third dyeing resulted in a very strong color. With these three groups I was able to get some delicate color distinctions from different bunches of yarns.

Sometimes intentionally, I twisted the yarns or tied them to leave a mark of the base color. When it was twisted, the color unevenly covered the yarn so that various shades in one line of thread were made. To get more of this effect, when the threads were drenched, I immersed some of them fully while others I poured the color on directly..

With these yarns I was able to produce some delicate areas with details which cannot be woven, such as dark shadowy parts of the picture. The excellent unevenness of color in one thread contains strengths and weaknesses that can be woven into the same space simultaneously. I could see the natural yet complicated expressions in the space. The result was convincing.





## 5. Building up

Building up the installation consists of two parts, one part is the woven object and the other part is the ready made object. To make a space like the hanger rack, I transformed the use of space slightly. The hanger rack used to be a space I dwelt in, so I invited people to come inside. This time my piece is like a tunnel that one can pass by.

Experiencing the lights and atmosphere in the half-closed space, while being inside of the woven tapestry, gives a different impression from the outside to the inside. The backside opens to the surface of the work and gives access into the space.

To make this, I wove two panels of tapestry and attached them into one piece. In the front part, I placed the figurative expression, the colorful and dreamy-like verdure tapestry. The image of flowers on this tapestry is the BOAFLOWERPOWER, the art piece itself wears a flower pattern. The back part is related to the front part. For example, the color spaces of the top in the front part, meet the back part, invading and connecting with each other. Also I added the thread and the fabric which was left over from the front part, gathering together and dyeing them in the same color. Some parts have similar textures which were formed with torn silk fabrics. Yet, they are not the same as the front part, the color which I chose was toned down and the atmosphere is darker, or deeper, than the other side. It is meant to be a background of the scenery.

This woven piece is hanging on the hangers, looking like a group of different clothes. But actually, it is one body. The slits and the different textured parts support the whole project's idea. They are situated on the usual things around our life.

An ordinary object comes together with and harmonies with hand crafted artwork. Two different symbols meet in one place, an artwork.



the front



the back



dimming light from the slits

## 6. Conclusion

Tapestry tells stories. In the past, the stories of the bible, of nature, even of flamboyant decorations and some important people's chronicles have been told.

Tapestry in this contemporary world contains stories and thoughts like other forms of art. It is interesting that the technique has not been much changed from the old ones to the contemporary ones. There were many attempts and experiments on technique but still it is acknowledged as a traditional technique. In this project I aimed to break away from my shell. To achieve different levels of goals I set, my work needed to be twisted, broken and rejoined. After all these practices and trials had their effect, I see the result of the processes and imagination.

The general idea which I had was to reach out from an ordinary experience to the people who have similar memories or totally different ones, bringing together the viewers who have similarities and dissimilarities to make them imagine and feel them. In this way I am building up the empathy in between artist myself and viewers. Moreover, like the place and the act of making a place comforted me in the past and in the present; I hope people also get comfort and encouragement from the piece.

Building up the idea of BOAFLOWERPOWER helped to tell me the answer of the questions which I made from the beginning of this project. Why I want to do art is to tell, express and finally communicate with myself to find out the way I feel better. The artwork is a medium, it is me to viewers.

It is a way of making things with thoughts and proper techniques, but looking easy and comfortable so anyone can imagine in many different ways.

It also tells different stories about someone's life as time goes by.

As it is important to connect to people's life, I planned and ideal for BOAFLOWERPOWER: the art is near you, the art works on you and the art works will gather together to spread 'feel good' energy on this world to make it better.

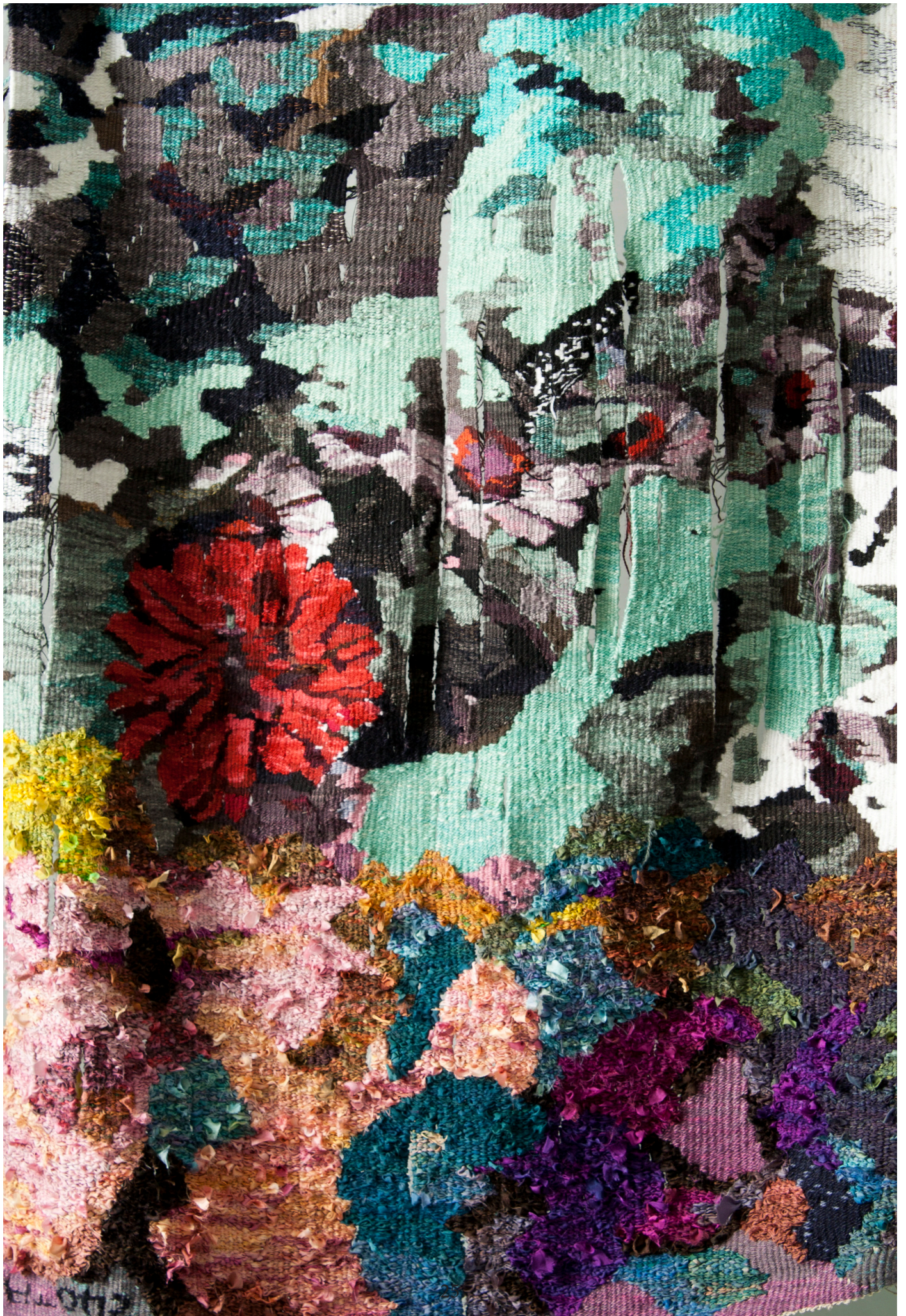
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## **Thanks to**

My Lord  
Family in Seoul  
Friends and classmates  
HDK staffs and Gothenburg  
Eunhye Korean Church, Gothenburg

## Special Thanks to

Professor Kari Steihaug  
Former professor Annika Ekdahl  
Emma Linde  
Magnus Haglund  
Alexandra Apple  
Master group 12'

